

witness, Doctor MacMillan, of the minimum wage board of the province of Ontario, said:

There seems to be no reason why if this principle is good for women's wages, it should not be applied at least to some classes of men's wages.

Further the report states:

The evidence also showed that some workers in Canada are receiving less than will enable them to adequately maintain this standard.

I think that is putting it very mildly indeed, but that was the unanimous statement of the committee after examination of all the evidence placed before them. It was stated by the Deputy Minister of Justice that minimum wage legislation was primarily, under the British North America Act, a matter for provincial legislation. But he also quoted section 132 of the British North America Act:

The parliament and government of Canada shall have all powers necessary or proper for performing the obligations of Canada or of any province thereof, as part of the British Empire, towards foreign countries arising under treaties between the empire and such foreign countries.

Commenting on this he said:

There can be no doubt that where Canada has entered into an obligation by treaty—and in that connection I mean an association with the empire, of course—within the meaning of section 132, which I have just read, I do not think there is any doubt but that parliament has power to legislate for the purpose of carrying into effect the provisions of the treaty.

That is a most important statement, and I think perhaps warrants the further statement of the committee itself:

This opinion goes to show that the British North America Act by no means contemplates industrial problems of the kind and scope to which Canadians to-day must adjust themselves.

The committee recommended, among other things:

That a conference of provincial and Dominion representatives intimately in touch with labour conditions throughout Canada be held in the near future to consult as to the best means to be employed of giving effect to the labour provisions of the Treaties of Peace.

I should like to ask the Prime Minister, who unfortunately is not in his seat, but to whom this message will undoubtedly be delivered, whether the government will not consider the calling of this conference at a very early date. Further than that, to this conference there might possibly be also committed the carrying out of the other provisions of the Versailles peace treaty. Anyone who has read anything of the proceedings of the League of Nations must understand that Canada is not by any means in a foremost position as regards labour legislation, and it seems to me that in ordinary decency, and having regard to the premier position which we occupy

among the British dominions, we ought not to lag behind in social legislation of this character.

Let me say that the evidence given before the committee showed the budget that was necessary in order to maintain a minimum standard of health and decency. There are a great many people living much below the standard, but the most careful social workers prepared for us an estimate which goes to show that in order to maintain a family properly, to clothe and feed them properly, and provide proper shelter, education, a moderate amount of recreation and other things of that kind, it is necessary to-day, according to the prices now prevailing, to spend in the neighbourhood of \$2,200 per annum. That you will find in the evidence of the committee.

Now, on the other hand, I ask what are the actual wages paid in Canada. I find, according to the Year Book of 1925, the latest figures that we have, the average yearly earnings of wage earners in manufacturing industries in Canada, as shown at page 429, amount to only \$959. That is less than half the amount that is considered necessary to maintain a family in health and decency, according to the figures prepared by some of the most careful investigators. It may be quite true that this average figure of \$959 includes the wages paid to unmarried men and to girls, but I submit that that does not make it any easier for the married man who has the responsibility of the family, for in the case of girls at least, they are paid very little more than what is necessary, according to the government's own standards, and as enforced by the minimum wage regulations of the various provinces. We had a concrete instance given us, which may help to make the subject very definite to all in this chamber.

In one manufacturing town in Ontario, and I think it is a fairly representative town, in a cotton industry the girls were receiving \$10 a week, and the men, many of them married, were receiving only \$15 a week. The \$10 had to be paid under the minimum wage laws of the province of Ontario. There was no legislative provision whatever as to the payment to married men, which simply meant that whereas, under the most rigid investigations, it had been found necessary to give \$10 a week to keep an unmarried girl, the men were getting only \$5 a week more. They were supposed to be able to keep a wife and family on that additional \$5. I ask anyone can it be done? If so at what cost?

I do not think I am going too far afield, Mr. Speaker, when I hear the fine phrases about the increasing prosperity of this country, about the bountiful harvest, about the greatly in-